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Country Profile

Honduras

August 1973

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SURVEY

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GENERAL SURVEY CHAPTERS

COUNTRY PROFILE Integrated perspective of the subject country • Chronology • Area Brief • Summary map

THE SOCIETY Social structure • Population • Labor • Health • Living conditions • Social problems • Religion • Education • Public information • Artistic expression

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS Political evolution of the state • Governmental strength and stability • Structure and function • Political dynamics • National policies • Threats to stability • The police • Intelligence and security • Countersubversion and counterinsurgency capabilities

THE ECONOMY Appraisal of the economy • Its structure—agriculture, fisheries, forestry, fuels and power, metals and minerals, manufacturing and construction • Domestic trade • Economic policy and development • International economic relations

TRANSPORTATION AND

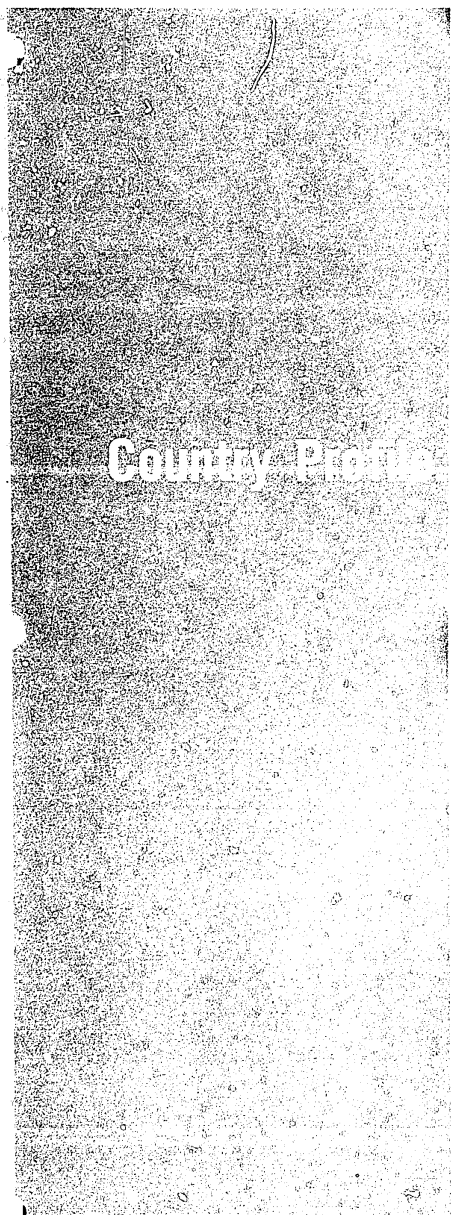
TELECOMMUNICATIONS Appraisal of systems • Strategic mobility • Railroads • Highways • Inland waterways • Pipelines • Ports • Merchant marine • Civil air • Airfields • The telecom system

MILITARY GEOGRAPHY Topography and climate • Military geographic regions • Strategic areas • Internal routes • Approaches: land, sea, air

ARMED FORCES The defense establishment • Joint activities • Ground forces • Naval forces • Air forces • Paramilitary

SCIENCE Level of scientific advancement • Organization, planning, and financing of research • Scientific education, manpower, and facilities • Major research fields

INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY Structure of organizations concerned with internal security and foreign intelligence, their responsibilities, professional standards, and interrelationships • Mission, organization, functions, effectiveness and methods of operation of each service • Biographies of key officials



Country Profile

Honduras

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A Land with Few Blessings

Honduras has two main claims to fame. It was the scene of a landing by Columbus in 1502—one of the few spots of the hemisphere to be so honored by the great navigator. The name Honduras (Spanish for "depths") derives from Columbus, who reportedly found the coastal water almost unfathomable. Subsequent commentators have pronounced it an apt title for a country so long sunk in backwardness and misery. In more recent decades, Honduras' renown has derived from its reputation as a typical "banana republic." It is the world's fourth largest producer and second only to Ecuador as an exporter of the fragile fruit. Other cash crops, forestry, mining, and manufacturing contribute to the economy, but the banana is the vital element. It is fair to say that without the investment and know-how introduced by the two giant fruit companies, United and Standard, Honduras would be an even poorer place. (C)

The country is overwhelmingly mestizo, Spanish-speaking, and Roman Catholic. Group antagonisms have been little more than local rivalries, and the homogeneous populace has tended to be a fellowship of the poor. The greater number lead close to a subsistence existence in dusty rural towns and growing urban slums, where even safe drinking water and other basic services are almost totally lacking. Having learned from experience to expect little, the Honduran seldom strives to improve his condition. His personal pride is undiminished by hardship, but he has only a slight sense of community, let alone of nationhood. This and the lack of a sizable population lend the country an air of solitude. (U/OU)

Only rarely have Honduran governments promoted social or economic progress on a national basis. Most have indulged strictly in self-preservation, certainly a necessary and yet seemingly a vain choice in view of the dozens of coups and revolutions that have wracked the country in its 150 years of independence (though only two have occurred since 1932, which places Honduras among the more stable countries of Latin America). Nevertheless, for Honduras, democracy is an

ideal that more often than not has failed in practice, and time after time the country's experience has been that of Latin America as a whole. A "great leader" enchants the people, installs his regime through questionable means, dominates the government, uses or alters the constitution to stay in power, and finally succumbs to a coup by an opposition force. This awkward system appears to work, and most Hondurans apparently tolerate it. But still, there seems to exist the realization that there is a better way, and so the quest for a government operating on constitutional principles has not been abandoned. (C)

Even geography has conspired to make Honduras a poor place, handicapped in its ability to pursue a unified purpose. Bordering on Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, it might be termed the "keystone state" of Central America. Yet, this facet has made Honduras important only as a base for regional political intrigue. The land itself is largely a jumble of mountains, valleys, and coastal plains—likened by some to a crumpled ball of paper—that separates the people into small localities and makes of them rivals more than friends. Even the swift streams that race from mountain to sea subdivide the land, and by being primarily unnavigable, leave much of the country untamed and isolated. (U/OU)

If the story of Honduras has not been filled with great men and great events, the latent strengths of its people may yet head the country toward better days. Observers have found them tenacious under heavy trials, civil with each other, gracious in the presence of "superior" foreigners, and quick to learn, when taught. Their country still possesses untapped natural wealth: fertile valley soil, large forests, sizable oceanic fisheries, a considerable hydroelectric potential, and mineral deposits of undetermined proportions. A tropical beauty produces moods of enchantment. What has been lacking is simply development—the cause that has been pursued only sporadically in recent years, and then by a procession of leaders who have largely failed their country. (C)

The Legacy and the Land (u/ou)

Honduras rests on one of the early sites of civilization in the Western Hemisphere. Centuries before the Spaniards arrived, Honduras was inhabited by Indian tribes, the greatest of whom were the Mayas—astronomers, mathematicians, engineers, and sculptors extraordinary. Mysteriously this culture died out in the region in the 9th century A.D., allowing the jungle to swallow up one of the greatest of Mayan monumental cities, Copan. Partially resurrected from ruins, it stands as something of a reproach to the Hondurans of today.

A little more than 20 years after the landing of Columbus, Hernan Cortes, the "conqueror of Mexico," visited Honduras to establish his authority there, but found it uninviting. Nonetheless, handfuls of settlers trickled in over the years, combating the irregular terrain, the unhealthy climate, and hostile natives, when they were not squabbling among themselves and murdering each other. Withal, Honduras remained a minor province of the Spanish empire, ruled from Guatemala and attracting chiefly those adventurers who believed the exaggerated tales of mineral riches or missionaries who anticipated hordes of converts.

It shortly became apparent that Honduras lacked the wealth of adjacent provinces, and so prospered little. The talented and influential gravitated elsewhere, leaving the area largely to small-scale farming. The peasants readily intermarried with the Indians, making Honduras the racially well-blended land it is today. Otherwise, history drew a blank, and the centuries passed uneventfully, as only the name of the latest Spanish governor changed.

Taking advantage of the struggles of other Latin American states against Spain, Honduras joined Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica in a bloodless and successful independence move in 1821. After attempts by Mexico to rule the region collapsed, representatives of the five met in 1823 to form the United Provinces of Central America, the first of several futile attempts to build a single Central American nation. Even the enlightened leadership of Francisco Morazan—later to be named the national hero of Honduras—could not salvage the dream, and the federation collapsed in 1838 under the burden of nationalistic fevers and liberal-conservative feuds.

In 1859 a strange interlude was provided by the celebrated American filibuster William Walker—a self-proclaimed liberator—when he led a brief military

campaign against Honduras on behalf of local dissidents, and subsequently died by the firing squad. Another significant year was 1905, when Samuel Zemurray, a shrewd Alabama merchant, acquired banana-growing land, which was later merged with the United Fruit Company.

The first three decades of the 20th century witnessed a jumble of crises as new presidents, rewritten constitutions, and recurring coups tumbled over each other in kaleidoscopic fashion. Finally, in 1932 Gen. Tiburcio Carias Andino arrived as national leader and established the stability of strongman rule for a remarkable 16 years (Built on the scale of a pro-football fullback, Carias survived by such precautions as having machineguns posted inside the cathedral when he worshipped.) A hand-picked successor, Juan Manuel Galvez led the nation for 6 years of semiprogressive government before giving way to wily, conservative dictator, Julio Lozano. In 1957 Ramon Villeda Morales, something of a novelty by reason of his progressive outlook and legitimate claim to office, instituted a program of social and economic reform, the likes of which had not been seen before.

A coup at the tail end of Villeda's term resulted in the installation of Oswaldo Lopez Arellano, who was fated to be President during the bloody, 5-day border war with El Salvador in July 1969 (during which Salvadoran troops pushed as far as 45 miles inside Honduras). In 1971 there momentarily arose the promise of a new era when the two major parties, normally blood enemies, signed a coalition pact and Ramon Ernesto Cruz became President. After a short period this weak experimental regime collapsed; a coup followed in which Cruz was replaced by Lopez, and the country reverted to its old political ways as Lopez dissolved Congress and proceeded to govern by decree.

Political upheavals in Honduras, quite fortunately, are not matched by comparable physical instabilities. Spanning the Central American isthmus from the Pacific to the Caribbean, Honduras is a muscular land—four-fifths mountainous—with peaks up to 9,400 feet, numerous plateaus, deep valleys, narrow inland plains, and a partially swampy coastal fringe. Its volcanoes are dormant—making it the only regional state so favored—and earth tremors, though frequent, are mild. Danger lurks, however, in hurricanes that sweep across the Caribbean and lash the coast. Heavy rains and thick forests blend to produce a panorama of

The People and Their Needs (c)

natural beauty. Particularly impressive are the air plants (epiphytes) that slowly engulf many of the giant trees and the quetzal, a tropical bird of crimson and blue-green hues that is generally regarded as the most beautiful bird of its kind in the world.

Shaped roughly like a squatty mushroom, Honduras comprises 43,300 square miles, making it second in size only to Nicaragua in Central America or slightly smaller than the state of Pennsylvania. The population is estimated at 2,813,000, only about 64 persons per square mile but burgeoning at the rate of 3.5% per annum—assuming that Honduran statistics are accurate.

The great majority of Hondurans live in one of two areas, the central plateau or the low-lying banana land of the northwest. Each area is served by one of the two major cities. Tegucigalpa, the political capital and the larger, is slow-paced, semifeudal, and somewhat isolated. Its charm lies in its temperate climate ("an eternal spring" say some) and its red tile roofed homes that climb narrow cobblestone streets up steep hillsides. By contrast, San Pedro Sula is a boomtown, the commercial-industrial hub of the nation, a relatively modern city of torrid heat and bustling businessmen. In its way, San Pedro Sula is unique, however—a place apart from the many sleepy, dusty towns that lack even a decent road. And "San Pedro" is even further removed from the wild, swampy Mosquitia region of the northeast, Honduras' last frontier.

What helps to make Honduras so distinctive regionally is the fact that it is the only country on the isthmus without a workable land transportation network. Despite recent roadbuilding efforts, the highway system is sparse. The most important route—and one of the few that is paved—is the North Road, connecting Puerto Cortes (the major port), San Pedro Sula, Tegucigalpa, and the Inter-American Highway. Even on it, deterioration, washouts, and meandering burros and peasants are potential hazards. The railroads, run chiefly by the banana companies, extend no more than 65 miles inland, and the decades-old dream of an interocean railway seems to have been abandoned. Still, the more remote districts of the country are accessible, by and large. In a typical blend of the Honduran primitive-modern lifestyle, the intrepid traveler can reach them by way of a winding footpath or in a small aircraft.

Statistics indicating that the dark-complexioned mestizos outnumber all other racial groups combined by a 9:1 ratio tell only part of the story of Honduran society. Other groups exist in numbers and are important, but their absence from the mainstream of daily life heightens the impression of a mestizo-dominated land. Indians, for example, constitute 7% of the population, but often they prefer to live apart, speaking their own tongues, observing their own customs, and going to town only when necessity beckons. Likewise, Negros and, to a lesser extent, whites frequently have opted for a semi-exclusive existence on the Caribbean-based Islas de la Bahia (Bay Islands) or the north coast, where some of their forebears were old-time buccaneers and slaves under the British flag.

On the mainland, whites and mestizos generally have held preferred positions, but discrimination against Negroes and Indians has never been strong. More often than not, social status cuts across racial lines and depends more on achievement than genetic





Mothers receiving instruction at a public health center.

makeup or ancestral ties. In poor Honduras, however, social mobility has its severe limits. Only recently has a viable middle class begun to develop, and the ranks of the wealthy are thin indeed. Almost alone among Latin American nations, Honduras lacks a long-established oligarchy.

Aside from ability and affluence, another mark of standing is family stability. The higher class man is generally married and stays married, even though he may keep a mistress on the side. The lower class man, generally regarding sex as a casual matter, often ignores the marriage ritual, perhaps to drift from woman to woman and leave a string of illegitimate children behind. Though guaranteed equal rights under the law, women for the greater part are expected to hold to a submissive pattern of behavior.

For the ordinary Honduran the vital concern of life is to obtain the basic necessities of food and shelter. For many this is not easy. Life expectancy falls several years short of the Latin American average of 57. Housing may consist of clumps of rural mud-wattle huts or

urban packing-crate slums. Food is a monotony of corn- and bean-based dishes. Undernourished, the Honduran is easy prey for intestinal and respiratory diseases. With few doctors and hospitals available, the masses apply folk medicine in the uncertain hope of miracle cures.

For many, life is at a bare subsistence level. Much of the average man's personal income—estimated at over 40%—goes for food. Other essentials, clothing and home furnishings, are frequently beyond reach, when available. Only a tiny minority of town dwellers can afford a car or telephone. The peasant has little need to concern himself with a pocketbook since he frequently exists on the limited fruits of the land, outside the money economy.

Public entertainment in Honduras is also spare. Few towns offer more than a moviehouse or billiard parlor for post-siesta diversion. Radiobroadcasts—picked up over the ubiquitous Japanese transistors—blanket the nation, but television is restricted to the large urban areas. Daily newspapers amount to less than half a

dozen and are of low quality. On a higher plane, few artists or scholars of note have been produced. Attempting to build on a Spanish cultural heritage that was exceedingly thin, Honduran intellectuals have had difficulty finding their own way.

The educational system, though improved in recent years, offers little outlet for the bright and ambitious. Theoretically, education is available to all persons age 7 to 15, but all too often adequate schools and trained teachers are simply not available. Lately, Honduras was given a functional literacy rate of 35%, the second lowest (next to Haiti) in the Western Hemisphere. Higher education is largely limited to the National University, where political activism often takes priority over learning.

The Roman Catholic Church, legally separate from the state, wields little influence in Honduras. Its coffers are quite empty, and its priests are generally few and of low caliber. It rarely engages in social action. And, while the man in the street calls himself a

Catholic, more often than not he knows little of the dogma of his church, or even of its inner physical dimensions. A number of Protestant missionary sects have encamped in Honduras, but have established little hold.

The government is left to improve the well-being of the people. Unfortunately, it lacks financial resources, trained administrators, know-how, and, most importantly, will. Honduran regimes often project goals for social-action programs but frequently fail to get them off the ground. And when they do, graft often siphons off what money there is. A notable exception to this pattern was forged by the Villeda government (1957-63). It made progress with a social security law, a labor code, and an agrarian reform law, and took progressive steps in the areas of education, public health, and housing. Thereafter, matters went backward. As of 1973, there were definite indications that the Lopez regime was trying to effect change, particularly in land redistribution, but it too faces an uphill battle.

The Rulers and Their Institutions (c)

Politics in Honduras aims at control of a constitutionally defined structure that is elastic enough to allow the ruling force to make of it what it will. The present constitution, promulgated in 1965, is the 12th under which Honduras has operated. Generally, little change is effected by succeeding documents, but they do serve to cover the latest coup with a veneer of legality. Primary power to run the country is vested in a President, elected by popular ballot to a single 6-year term. Normally a dominant figure, the President may expect little opposition from his Council of Ministers, or from the National Congress, which is made up of the elected representatives of the 18 regional departments and which generally acts as a rubber stamp.

The principal groups contesting power in Honduras

are the Nationalists and Liberals. Essentially feuding clans, they are made up of men who play a ruthless game to seize power both within their own ranks and against the opposition. The National Party, basically more conservative, has been more expert in recent years at manipulating the political processes. Three splinter Communist parties, one professing allegiance to Moscow and two to Peking, are capable of stirring unrest, but they represent little internal threat. Generally, the ballot on election day is restricted to the two major parties, who regularly accuse each other of theft, fraud, and intimidation. A low level of voter participation reflects a high degree of voter apathy, especially among the rural poor who through experience have come to doubt the promises of city-bound politicians.

Any bare-bones description of the Honduran Government begs the question of who actually runs the country. Without doubt, the military establishment is the final arbiter, for no government can stay in power against its active opposition—a principle that in essence is even sanctioned by the constitution. Other power centers include a small but growing democratic labor movement and organized business. Radical students, operating—sometimes in violent outbursts—from the university, and the weak but relatively independent voice of the press also have an impact. But in the end there is only one arbiter. Sometimes the military acts in the public interest, but always in its own interest; and when the time comes for a change of government, it feels little constraint against acting.

For Honduras external affairs normally focus only on its immediate neighbors and the United States. Honduras participates in regional and world bodies, including the Organization of American States and the United Nations, but exerts little influence. The foreign outlook of the Hondurans is still colored by the grim little war with El Salvador of July 1969. Fueled by a longstanding border dispute and the issue of illegal aliens from overcrowded El Salvador, hostilities ultimately were sparked by a hotly contested soccer match (soccer in this region being more than simply a national pastime). By the time hostilities were called off, Hondurans clearly were the losers and even more clearly were embittered against the peacekeepers—principally toward the regional organizations and to some degree the United States. As a result, Honduras began to back away from regional cooperation, including that with the Central American Common Market (CACM), an organization with which it was already disillusioned. Also it began to look for a time to Western European nations rather than the United States for military supplies.

Momentary Honduran pique with Washington, however, belies the fact that ties with the United States over the years have been close. While some elements have berated the United States for its alleged domineering stance and economic imperialism, the more prevalent attitude has been to see the "colossus of the North" as a beneficial big brother that can funnel economic and military aid into the needy homeland. In return, Honduras has sided with the United States in both World Wars, in the Cuban missile crisis, and in the 1965 Dominican crisis.



Bananas and the Peasant (c)

Honduras is one of the least developed countries of Latin America. In 1971, its per capita GDP was about half the Latin American average: \$260 compared to \$530. For years, Honduras has run a balance of payments deficit. It is burdened with a sizable external debt, chiefly as a result of loans from the World Bank and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration. Defense and public improvement expenditures have outpaced increased tax revenues in recent years and resulted in growing budgetary deficits.

All is not completely sour, however. In particular, a conservative monetary policy has lent the country at least an air of economic stability. The monetary unit, the lempira—named after the Indian chief who resisted Spanish conquest in the 16th century—has been maintained at a rate of 2 lempiras to the U.S. dollar since 1926, the year of its creation. Moreover, inflation has been kept largely in check, at least by Latin American standards.

Even so, Honduran needs are multitudinous: more jobs and more job skills; land redistribution and a greater use of good growing land; larger social benefits for the productive members of society; vastly improved transportation facilities; an influx of foreign capital; tax reform; and a redistribution of local revenues, recently devoted to the 1969 war and its aftermath, to care for domestic needs. Badly handicapped by its several shortcomings, the economy has tended to move forward only by inches. The blame perhaps rests chiefly with the government, which until recently had largely refused to play the role of the spurs of the economy.

Honduras must export to live, selling abroad its agricultural products—chiefly bananas, as well as some coffee, cotton, meat, and timber—and importing a broad range of raw materials and manufactured goods not available locally. The United States is easily Honduras' chief commercial partner, accounting for about half of its trade. West Germany and Japan are distant runners-up. Trade with the CACM has fallen drastically since ties were broken with El Salvador in 1969 and Honduras reintroduced duties on CACM imports in January 1971, thereby becoming in effect a nonparticipating member of the organization.

The backbone of the economy is agriculture, which regularly accounts for more than one-third of the country's national and 70% of its export earnings. Two of every three employed Hondurans work the land. Unhappily, only about 14% of the land is arable and

only about half of that is cultivated. Moreover, productivity per acre ranks among the lowest in Latin America. Typically, the small farmer clings to his tiny hillside plot, while the good valley land is trampled by the grazing herds of the large landholder. The odds are heavy that the peasant has heard little or nothing of chemical fertilizers, crop rotation, irrigation, and erosion prevention.

In sharp contrast to the small farmers stand the mighty fruit companies. United Fruit is rivaled only by Standard Fruit in banana production, an enterprise that has proved to be a rather risky and time-consuming undertaking, what with crop disease, bad weather, and a fluctuating sales market taking a toll of profits. Undeniably, United Fruit wields considerable influence in Honduras, as its critics are quick to point out. But it is also true that the firm has made a significant social as well as economic contribution in providing for its workers markedly better homes, stores, schools, and clinics than are normally available.

The chief bane of the Honduran economy has been the failure to exploit what nature's resources this small nation has. Huge stands of pine and hardwood trees—including perhaps the greatest number of mahogany trees in the world—have until recently either been ignored or harvested so poorly as to bring little profit. Some small-scale mining of precious and base metals occurs sporadically, but in toto the nation's mineral supply has yet to be accurately estimated. Only within the past few years has the fishing industry, centered on the shrimp catch, attained commercial importance. Nor until recently has much been done to promote tourism despite such attractions as Copan, the Islas de la Bahia beaches, and reasonably accessible hunting, hiking, and fishing. (Lago de Yojoa, the country's largest, is reported to be so bursting with bass that these fish have turned cannibalistic.)

Some effort has been put into manufacturing, but such enterprise remains something of a novelty in this least industrialized Central American state. Most of what exists, including a small steel mill, is located in San Pedro Sula or its environs. Food processing for export and the manufacture of consumer items for the domestic market are undertaken there, though not extensively. Such factors as inefficient labor and antiquated equipment result frequently in poor-quality, over-priced goods. Exceptions are found in American-sponsored efforts, such as shirtmaking, and in such native crafts as woodcarving.

Breaking the Barrier of Inertia (c)

In recent times some progress has been accomplished in making Honduras into a stable and viable national state. Yet forward movement has not been so great as to assure the country's future direction. And if there is to be a better future, what will bring it about? Various remedies have been offered. None is the panacea that some Hondurans have been prone to seek; there appear to be no easy remedies for national retardation. In the first instance, Honduras still requires certain basics that more advanced societies take for granted—better transportation, more electric powerplants, a decent telephone system, and a good Pacific port. In sum, Honduras simply lacks a solid takeoff point.

Honduras seemingly must seek to improve on its nature in order to move forward economically. The nation apparently needs hope to spark a dormant work ethic—a profound belief that effort will create a better society. A greater sense of individual dedication to national efforts would be helpful, too. As it is, the really talented Hondurans frequently opt out of contributing to their country's progress. Politicians may sit on their hands or leave the country during a rival regime, and frequently the wealthy may export their capital rather than risk investing in their own nation. The rather talented cabinet of the new Lopez regime may, however, prove a refreshing exception and begin a new trend.

It may be, too, that Honduras simply cannot cope by itself, given its condition, but needs outside help. Many Honduran politicians have bemoaned the lack of foreign investment, although at times doing little themselves to encourage it. Many Latin American economists have reasoned that all would be well if the U.S. housewife would pay a few cents more a pound for bananas and coffee. Some have seen free trade within the CACM as a promising solution, but in practice this concept has yet to materialize.

As the Hondurans come increasingly to believe that they are their own best friends, as they now seem to be doing, they have the opportunity to reassess their capacities for growth. Again, it should be noted that Honduras has untapped natural resources capable of being exploited. Only about 15% of the country's waterpower potential—estimated to be more than one-third of the total for Central America—has been used, for example. Agricultural production could be boosted by fairly simple methods—wider use of the steel plow, greater supplies of four-wheeled carts, and the increased bulldozing of basic farm-to-market roads. The expenditure of greater sums on education could produce the sort of literate, skilled personnel that constitute one of the primary strengths of a modern society.



Chronology (u/ou)

1502

Columbus reaches coast of Honduras during fourth voyage.

1539

Honduras and four other provinces of Central America are incorporated into captaincy general of Guatemala, administrative division of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, in the Spanish Indies.

1821

September

Independence from Spain is gained and Honduras becomes part of Mexican Empire.

1823

Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica form United Provinces of Central America. Francisco Morazan of Honduras serves as President from 1836 to collapse of federation in late 1838.

1838

November

Honduras declares independence from federation.

1932-48

Dictatorship of Gen. Tiburcio Carias Andino provides first period of prolonged domestic peace.

1948

October

Juan Manuel Galvez (handpicked successor of Gen. Carias) is elected President on National Party ticket.

1949

January

President Galvez and Vice President Julio Lozano are inaugurated for 6-year term.

1951

May

General strike paralyzes entire north coast area.

November

President Galvez leaves country for "medical treatment" following indecisive elections; Vice President Lozano becomes Acting President.

December

Newly elected Congress with mandate for settling presidential election fails to convene; Lozano declares himself *de facto* Chief of State.

1956

August

Revolt against Lozano's authoritarian tactics is quickly suppressed; Liberal Party leaders are exiled.

October

Fraudulent election of Lozano's handpicked Constituent Assembly results in bloodless military coup; interim military junta assumes power.

1957

July

Defense Minister Col. Oswaldo Lopez Arellano emerges as strong military leader with ouster of Gen. Roque J. Rodriguez from interim junta.

September

Constituent Assembly is elected; Liberals win control by wide margin.

November

Dr. Ramon Villeda Morales, Liberal leader, is named constitutional President-elect by Constituent Assembly; Col. Oswaldo Lopez Arellano becomes member of junta.

December

Villeda Morales is inaugurated President for 6-year term. Constituent Assembly becomes National Congress; new constitution is promulgated; Lopez is appointed Chief of the Armed Forces.

1960

November

Longstanding border dispute with Nicaragua is settled by the International Court of Justice; disputed territory awarded to Honduras.

1963

October

Military coup by Lopez overthrows Villeda, thus preventing elections scheduled for 13 October.

1965

February

Constituent Assembly elections are held; Nationalists "win" 35 seats to Liberals' 29.

March

Constituent Assembly elects Lopez President of Honduras. Constituent Assembly changes status to National Congress.

June

Lopez is inaugurated for 6-year term.

1967

May

Honduran and Salvadoran troops clash in undemarcated border area.

1968
March

Government party "wins" 241 of the 276 municipalities through extensive fraud and coercion.

July

Honduras and El Salvador exchange prisoners captured during the border clash in 1967.

1969

June

Honduras and El Salvador break relations over mistreatment of one another's nationals.

July

Hostilities erupt between El Salvador and Honduras. The Organization of American States obtains cease-fire with great difficulty.

1971
January

Major interest groups sign unity pact governing March election and government that will follow.

June

Ramon Ernesto Cruz, elected on 26 March, is inaugurated for 6-year term.

1972

December

Lopez ousts Cruz in bloodless military coup; dissolves congress and governs by decree.

Area Brief

LAND (U/OU):

Size: 43,300 sq. mi. (27.7 million acres)

Use: 7% cropland, 27% forested, 30% pasture, 36% wasteland and built-up areas

Land boundaries: 950 mi.

WATER (U/OU):

Limits of territorial waters (claimed): 12 n. mi.

Coastline: 510 mi.

PEOPLE (U/OU):

Population: 2,813,000, average annual growth rate 3.5% (1970)

Ethnic divisions: 90% mestizo, 7% Indian, 2% Negro, and 1% white

Religion: About 97% nominally Roman Catholic

Language: Spanish

Literacy: 57.4% of persons 10 years of age and over (est. 1970)

Labor force: 900,000 (est. mid-1972); approximately 65% agriculture, 12% financial and housing services, 8% manufacturing, 5% commerce, 9% other; 8% unemployed

Organized labor: 7% to 10% of labor force (mid-1972)

GOVERNMENT (U/OU):

Legal name: Republic of Honduras

Type: Republic

Capital: Tegucigalpa

Political subdivisions: 18 departments, 275 municipalities, 1 central district (Tegucigalpa-Comayaguela area)

Legal system: Based on Roman and Spanish civil law; some influence of English common law; constitution adopted 1965; judicial review of legislative acts in Supreme Court; legal education at University of Honduras in Tegucigalpa; accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction, with reservations

Branches: Constitution provides for elected President, unicameral legislature, and national judicial branch

Government leader: Gen. Oswaldo Lopez Arellano, chief of state

Suffrage: Universal and compulsory over age 18

Elections: May 1971, Nationalist Party candidate won election; removed by coup in December 1972; next election February 1977; municipal elections March 1974

Political parties and leaders: Liberal Party (PLH), Carlos Roberto Reina Idiaquez, Andres Alvarado Puerto, Jorge Bueso Arias, Modesto Rodas Alvarado, and Max Velasquez

Diaz; National Party (PNH), Alejandro Lopez Cantarero, Ricardo Zuniga Augustinus, General Oswaldo Lopez Arellano, Armando Velasquez Cerrato; Popular Progressive Party (PPP-uninscribed), Gonzalo Carias Castillo; Orthodox Republican Party (PRO-uninscribed), Roque Jacinto Rivera; National Innovation and Unity Party (PINU-uninscribed), Miguel Andonie Fernandez; Communist Party of Honduras Soviet (PCH/S-outlawed), Dionisio Ramos Bejarano; Communist Party of Honduras/China (PCH/C-outlawed), Tomas Erazo Pena; Workers' Party of Honduras (PTH-illegal), Roque Ochoa

Communists: 400-800; 2,000 sympathizers

Member of: IADB, ICAO, ILO, OAS, CACM, U.N.

ECONOMY (U/OU):

GDP: US\$741 million (1971 current prices); \$260 per capita

Food: Self-sufficient in corn, beans, sugar, and meat; dependent upon imports for wheat and dairy products

Main industries: Agricultural processing, textiles, clothing, wood products

Electric power: 1972 installed capacity, 170,000 kw.; production, 380 million kw.-hr.

Exports: Bananas, coffee, tobacco, frozen meat, corn, beans, cotton, gold, and silver

Imports: Machinery, equipment, vehicles, consumer durables, fuels

Monetary conversion rate: 2 lempiras = US\$1

Fiscal year: Calendar year

COMMUNICATIONS (U/OU):

Railroads: 357 route miles; 202 route miles 3'6" gage, 155 route miles 3'0" gage; all single track

Highways: 3,500 miles, 750 bituminous surfaced, 1,850 miles gravel surfaced or improved earth, 900 miles unimproved earth

Inland waterways: 750 miles navigable by small craft

Ports: 3 major (Puerto Cortes, Tela, La Ceiba) and 9 minor

Merchant marine: 12 refrigerator ships of 1,000 g.r.t. and over, totaling 56,792 g.r.t. or 53,594 d.w.t.

Civil air: 24 major transports

Airfields: 120 usable; 9 have runways 4,000-7,999 feet long; 4 have permanent-surface runways; 96 airfield sites, 2 seaplane stations

Telecommunications: Improved but inadequate; connections to international Central American microwave network; 15,200 telephones; 300,000 radio and 35,000 TV receivers; 102 AM, 10 FM, and 7 TV stations

DEFENSE FORCES (C):

Military: 10,490

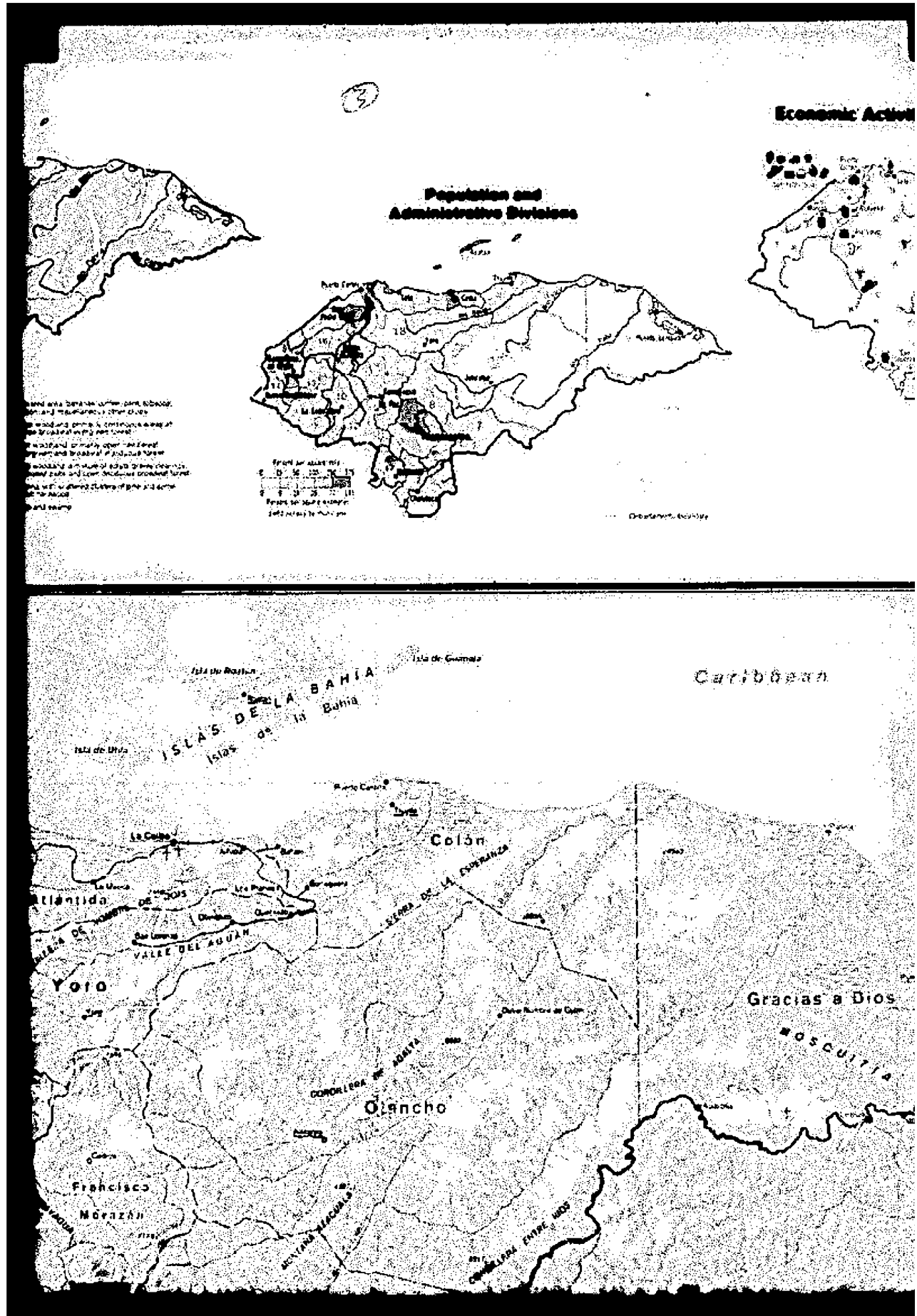
Major ground units: 1 infantry brigade, 9 separate battalions (7 infantry, 1 artillery, and 1 engineer)

Aircraft: 45, the majority propeller-driven

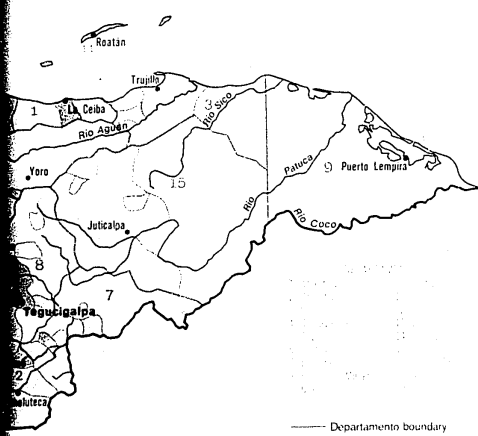
Supply: For military materiel dependent on foreign sources, chiefly the United States. Domestic production includes food, clothing, shoes, and a few other quartermaster items

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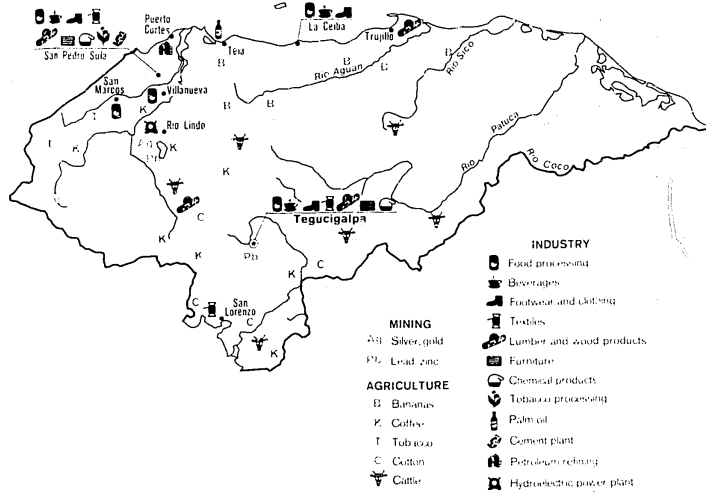
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Population and Administrative Divisions

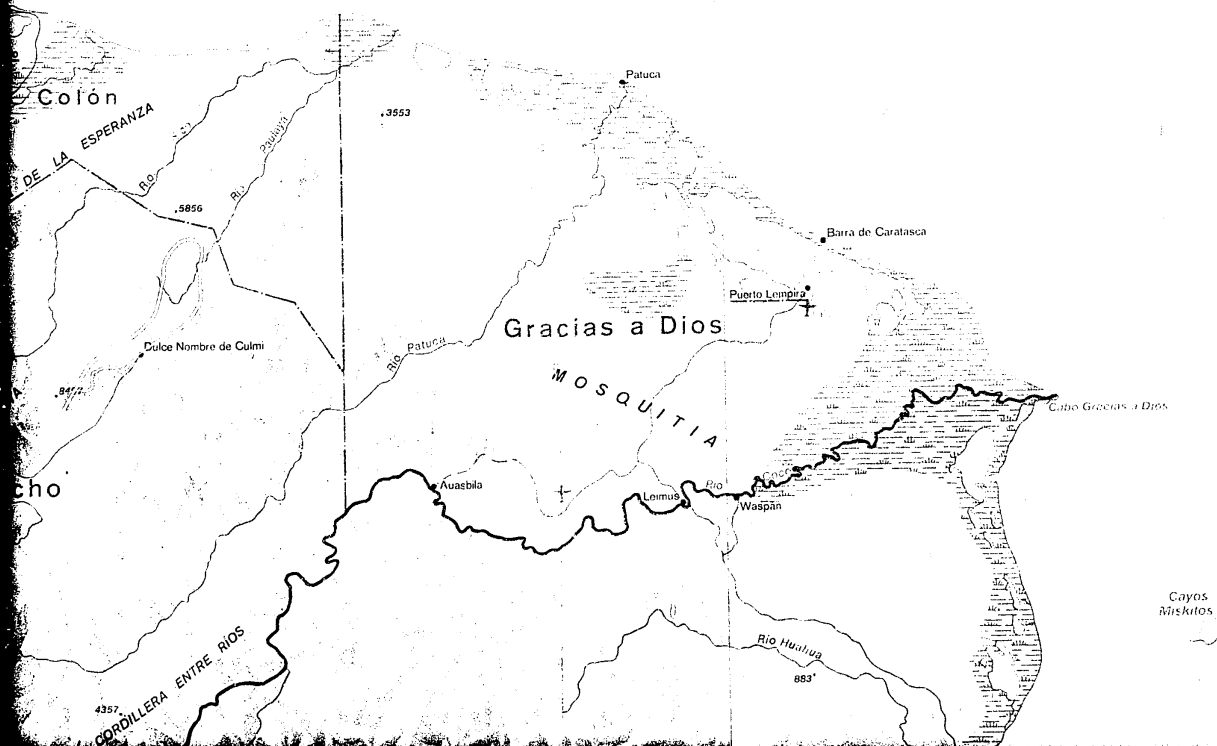


Economic Activity



Isla de Guanaja

Caribbean Sea





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